



Zachary Moon, *Goatwalking: A Quaker Pastoral Theology* (Leiden: Brill Research Perspectives, 2021), pp. 60. ISBN: 9789004462090. Paperback, €84.00.

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Review of Zachary Moon, *Goatwalking: A Quaker Pastoral Theology* (Leiden: Brill Research Perspectives, 2021), pp. 60. ISBN: 9789004462090. Paperback, €84.00.



Zachary Moon writes that ‘for a tradition with a long history of service to others, there is little written on Quaker practices of care’ (p. 3). His *Goatwalking* is therefore a welcome contribution to Quaker pastoral literature. In this book, Moon asks if pastoral metaphors are still appropriate to describe the work of pastoral care. Even if the metaphor is rooted in the ministry of Jesus, does the image of the shepherd and their flock adequately convey the task of caring for others in a faith community? Moon offers a critique of Seward Hiltner’s ‘shepherding perspective’ articulated in 1959. Hiltner’s metaphor casts the pastoral carer as ‘providing guidance, protection and sustenance to a flock of dependents’ (p. 11). There is no interdependence between shepherd and sheep: ‘The shepherd is ultimately all powerful protector and predator’. (p. 13). Moon concludes that a new metaphor is needed that speaks to pastoral care in the dangerous wilderness, without the problematic power dynamics of the shepherd.

To construct a new pastoral metaphor, Moon turns to work of Jim Corbett, co-founder of the original Sanctuary Movement which provided safe havens for refugees and asylum seekers. Corbett was a Quaker and rancher, coining the term ‘goatwalking’. Moon describes ‘goatwalking’ as a practice ‘rooted in liberation from oppressive systems, dynamic and mutual relationality, and abundance in the wilderness. Goatwalking . . . is a nomadic, un-tamed, free-range, gleanings-based husbandry, made possible by the symbiotic cooperation of a herder and two or more goats’ (p. 15). Goatwalking involves ‘a direct and radical refusal of enmeshed dependency on “civilized” society and industry, and a direct and radical return to interdependency within the ecosystem’ (p. 16). Moon identifies several values from Corbett’s goatwalking that can be used to guide pastoral care: alertness, adaptability, symbiotic relationship, and co-creativity. Moon goes on to describe how each of these values relates to Quakerism, specifically in the practices of expectant waiting, ministry and eldership. The book begins with a substantial foreword by Jim Higginbotham. Higginbotham does not address goatwalking but offers a perspective on pastoral theology informed by the metaphor of sanctuary, thus connecting to the work of Corbett.

Perhaps one difficulty with using goatwalking as a metaphor is that, as Moon states, ‘Corbett’s pastoralism is not intended to be read metaphorically, but practically’ (p. 15). Moon recognises that this may render his project ‘heretical’ (p. 15), but I think the book would benefit from a stronger engagement with the metaphorical power of goatwalking. It seems to me that, once Moon extracts the abstract values of alertness, adaptability, symbiotic relationship, and co-creativity from goatwalking and moves into discussion of pastoral care, the vivid story of goatwalking is left behind. I would have appreciated the presence of the goats throughout the whole book.

The book may also benefit from explicitly addressing some of the weaknesses in the goatwalking metaphor. It seems that a key aspect of goatwalking is an isolated encounter with the discomforts of the wilderness: ‘one must relinquish the inner expectations and outer securities of modern society’, relinquishing the ‘inessential materials’ of toilet paper and the like, ‘leaving behind enmeshed dependency on inessential structures and materials’ (p. 16). In this, I can hear echoes of the rugged individualism and self-reliance of the Transcendentalists as found in Henry David Thoreau’s ‘Walden’. How might this conflict with, say, a disability perspective, where for some disabled folk the many technologies of ‘modern society’ and the accessibility of the well-equipped home are essential for both surviving and thriving with dignity?

Moon invites the reader to wander through the book in the manner of Corbett, who says ‘I prove no points. This is no teaching’ (p. 4). This makes me wonder who the book is for. With the inclusion of long personal testimonies, and Moon’s gentle, meditative style, I wonder if this title would be better as a devotional book for a general Quaker audience rather than an expensive academic title with a limited readership. I hope Moon will consider writing such a book, as his work is well-written, accessible, contains much that is salient and thought provoking, and deserves to be read widely among Friends and the wider Christian church.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

